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Jaffa was once a proud Palestinian port city but its conquest in 1948 drove 95 percent of its Palestinian residents into exile. Two years later it was annexed by Tel Aviv and turned into a dilapidated 'Arab backyard' of an Israeli city. Today it is a 'mixed city' with a Palestinian minority of 30 percent under pressure from gentrification and real estate predators. This new book by Daniel Monterescu provides an extraordinarily well-informed account of Palestinian-Israeli relations in this complex microcosm, focusing on the peculiar forms of everyday interaction and circumstantial coalitions that make up 'contrived coexistence'. Monterescu lived in Jaffa for three decades and attended its Collège des Frères, a mixed Christian-Jewish-Muslim school. But it took the 'personal and intellectual obsession' (p. xi) he developed with Jaffa over the last decade or so to produce this outstanding book. Benefitting from rich insider knowledge, the book employs refreshingly diverse means of analysis, including interviews, ethnographic observations, historical sources as well as visual representations such as maps and photographs.

Much more than a story *about* Jaffa, the book marks a clear break from the dominant trajectories of research on Israel/Palestine. These, as Monterescu argues, often 'rendered invisible' the history of contact so visible in binational cities like Jaffa (p. 11). Challenging this trend the book focuses on opposing as well as complementary cultural and social processes (p. 6), emphasising a relational perspective grounded in 'ambivalence' (p. 72), 'systematic complexity' (p. 34) and 'spatial heteronomy' (p. 38). Importantly, this perspective illuminates how processes of distinction operate *through* integration (p. 127). Both the Introduction and Part One ('Beyond Methodological Nationalism') establish a convincing argument for a theoretical 'third space' between multicultural coexistence and the total exclusion of ethnocracy (p. 33).

The book contains fascinating stories of seemingly contradictory relations, one of them between two neighbours in Jaffa: Safiyya and Hanna, a widowed Muslim woman in her nineties and a widowed Jewish Moroccan woman in her seventies. The Jewish woman lives in a tidy apartment building and the Palestinian in a ramshackle hut next to it. They become close friends across divides through sharing the experience of aging, memories of their controlling husbands, and an ability to speak Arabic (pp. 211–212). Such unusual coalitions exemplify a social contact zone that simultaneously separates *and* relates the city's Jewish and Arab inhabitants (p. 212).

Part Two explores the 'predatory' ethno-nationalist gentrification of Jaffa. Although often invoking an orientalist civilizing mission, the motivations of idealist, radical or politicised gentrifiers are far from monolithic (p. 193). These portraits of individuals are aided by in-depth analysis of controversial housing projects, which promise their wealthy residents 'urban renewal' in the 'New-Old Jaffa' and promote 'a city within a city' (p. 179). Seeking to explore primarily the 'fissures and contradictions' of such projects of purification, Monterescu identifies a failure of the underlying colonial objective of 'a stable regime of complete ethnic separation' (p. 293).

However, one alternative conclusion could be that 'ethnogentrification' deepens the settler colonial 'principle of elimination' (Wolfe 2006): it encompasses and co-opts native identities and spaces, replacing what had been destroyed with the 'old-new'. Forms of integration, such as granting citizenship to Palestinians in Israel, would then not challenge but effectively normalise and eventually underpin the settler colonial majority's power. Rather than being colonialism's failure, could ambivalence and contradiction not form part of its success? While inspiring such critical questions, Monterescu shows successfully how projects of purification collapse in this particular context of mix, whether class-based purification, 'Judaization' or 'Palestinianization' (pp. 286–287).

Part Three of the book delves deeply into the relational ambivalence of intimate life stories, suggesting that the “grey area” surrounding the margins of collective self’ is wider than assumed (p. 211). The section also analyses the ambivalence of Jewish-Arab cooperation during the Israeli justice protests of 2011. This includes inter-generational disagreement about the modes of cooperation with Jewish Israelis, or over the timing of raising a Palestinian flag (pp. 255–257). The final part of the book explores the young alternative scene in Jaffa through portraits of important establishments and initiatives that produce a counter-culture from the position of ‘creative marginality’ (p. 273).

In showing how Jaffa is both shared and shattered, the book is an important and timely contribution to ongoing debates about mutual relations between Palestinians and Israelis in the context of recurring conflict, entrenched inequality and ongoing colonisation. It is essential reading for everyone interested in contemporary Palestinian-Israeli relations and should be of particular interest to political and urban anthropologists.

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References

Wolfe, P. 2006. “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native.” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (4): 387–409. doi:10.1080/14623520601056240.